

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Olinda Tracy 3 Landing Zones at 92-1, 174-2, and 164-4

Project No.: 100153025

Project Manager: James Hill

Location: Colusa, Contra Costa, and Solano counties

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action:

Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region (WAPA) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of several federally owned and operated transmission lines throughout California, including Olinda Tracy line (ODA-TCY), located in northern California from Tracy to Olinda substations. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring WAPA maintains reliable access to transmission towers and other facilities to comply with the National Electric Safety Code, Western States Coordinating Council, and WAPA directives for protecting human safety and maintaining the reliable operation of the transmission system.

WAPA proposes to replace spacers on spans along the ODA-TCY transmission line. To accomplish this task, landing zones (LZ) outside the right-of-way near Towers 92/1, 174/2, and 164/4 will be used in three locations within Colusa, Contra Costa, and Solano counties. Equipment will be staged at the landing zones.

Findings:

In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), WAPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, WAPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

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Attachment: Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

Proposed Action: Olinda Tracy 3 Landing Zones at 92-1, 174-2, and 164-4

Project Site Description

The three proposed landing zones are in Colusa, Contra Costa, and Solano counties, California. The landing zone designated LZ1, in Colusa County, is on idle farmland east of Tower 92-1, about 6 miles southwest of the town of Williams and surrounded by orchards. A canal runs along the northeast side of the property but is separated by a fence and levee, and a closed landfill is on the property to the west. The landing zone designated LZ3 is 800 feet southwest of Tower 174-2 in Contra Costa county on farmland adjacent to Jersey Island Road, and west of Taylor Slough and several miles east of the town of Oakley. The landing zone designated LZ4, is in a remote area of Solano County, 600 feet north of Tower 164-4 on a disturbed area within grazing land, about 0.9 miles northwest of the Sacramento River, and has been previously used as a landing zone.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources <u>Explanation:</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A cultural resources survey of the proposed landing zones was performed on March 31. LZ1 and LZ3 are previously disturbed agricultural areas. LZ4 is previously disturbed and used before as a helicopter landing zone. No cultural resource concerns were identified in any of the LZs.		
No ground disturbance is required. Natural Resources will be contacted immediately if archeological, paleontological, or historic evidence is found.		

2. **Geology and Soils**



Explanation:

Ground disturbance is not anticipated in this project; therefore, no impacts would occur.

3. **Plants** (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)



Explanation:

No special-status plants are known or expected at the landing zones.

4. **Wildlife** (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)



Explanation:

A biological survey was conducted on March 31, 2023 for migratory birds and burrowing owl. At LZ1, no resources of concern were noted.

At LZ.3, a large stick nest was observed on tower 174/2 and tower 174/3. A pair of red-tailed hawks were observed perched on tower 174/2, though no nesting activity was observed. No birds were observed on or near the nest on tower 174/3. Crews conducting tower work have been advised to conduct one pass over the nest in tower 174/2 from the air in the helicopter to determine if eggs are present. If eggs are present, they will delay work at this location until nestlings have fledged. If the nest is determined active, crews will also employ a "no-fly" zone in the vicinity of tower 174/2 and will approach the LZ from the opposite direction of the tower to limit any potential disturbance to the nest. No burrowing owl activity was observed in proximity to the LZ. There are no other biological concerns.

At LZ4 - No nests were observed on towers and no burrowing owl activity in proximity to the LZ. No special status wildlife is known or expected in the project area.

For the protection of migratory birds, if planned activities occur between March 1 and August 15, nesting bird surveys will be required prior to project activities. If a nest is detected, an appropriate buffer will be marked in which all O&M activities and herbicide applications will be prohibited from March 1 to August 15 or until nestlings have fledged. A standard nest buffer of 50 feet (250 feet for raptors) will be used, unless otherwise indicated by the surveying biologist. Nesting surveys can be conducted up to 3 weeks prior to project activities.

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish** (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)



Explanation:

The project area does not have any water bodies, floodplains, or fish; therefore, no impacts would occur.

6. **Wetlands**
Explanation:



The project area does not have wetlands; therefore, no impacts would occur.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**
Explanation:



Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

8. **Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**
Explanation:



The land use would not change at the project site. Nor is the project within, or near, any specially designated areas, such as National Scenic Rivers.

9. **Visual Quality**
Explanation:



The visual quality would be consistent with the existing use of the transmission right-of-way corridor. There would be no significant change to the visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**
Explanation:



A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during the conductor repair. The helicopter would operate for a few hours with 2-3 take-off and landings. Emissions were modeled and do not exceed the daily thresholds in lbs/day for the Yolo-Solano AQMD. Results in lbs/day for each pollutant are shown below:

ROG CO NOX SOX PM 10 PM 2.5
13.54 16.88 20.44 3.04 10.52 1.59

The following relevant SOPs were adopted by WAPA to support the state implementation plan to restore air quality in the region.
AQ-SOP-1: The Contractor will adhere to all applicable requirements of those agencies having jurisdiction over air quality matters, and any necessary permits for O&M will be obtained.
AQ-SOP-2: Machinery and vehicles will be kept in good operating condition and older equipment will be replaced with equipment meeting applicable emission standards; appropriate emissions-control equipment will be maintained for vehicles and equipment, per EPA and/or WAPA air-emission requirements.
AQ-SOP-3: Idle equipment will be shut down when not in active use; visible emissions from stationary generators will be controlled.
AQ-SOP-5: There will be no open burning of construction trash.
AQ-SOP-7: Major operations will be avoided on days when the local Air Quality Index is expected to exceed 150.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

There are no residences within the project location. Helicopter noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety. Contractor shall be required to follow the OSHA standards set forth in 29 CFR 1910.269 specifically paragraphs (a)(2), (b), (c), (g), (k), (p), and (r) as required under (a)(E)(2). Contractor shall also adhere to the requirements under Title 8 Cal OSHA Electrical Safety Order specifically Subchapter 5 Article 38 and Subchapter 7 Article 12. Contractor shall maintain a safe working distance from conductors as described in the above OSHA standards. If a safe working distance cannot be maintained, a clearance shall be requested 3 days in advance.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:



Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary:



Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:



Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation, if necessary:



Have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B(4) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.

Explanation, if necessary:



Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: WAPA has notified and received permission from the landowner to use the landing zone site.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

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